

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A method for operating a call center, wherein incoming external telephone calls by callers are automatically distributed to terminals to be answered by call center agents, comprising the process steps:

- connecting an external call to a free terminal of an agent;
- ~~storing a message created by the agent concerning content of the call between the caller and the agent;~~
- ~~automatically assigning the message to the existing connection;~~
- forwarding the call to a separate hold line, if an acoustic pause occurs, the length of which either the agent no longer wants to tolerate or which is no longer accepted by the call center system;
- storing a message created by the agent concerning content of the call between the caller and the agent at the same time or shortly before the call is forwarded;
- automatically assigning the stored message to the existing connection;
- renewing connection of the held call to a free terminal of an agent after the caller is ready to continue the call; and
- playing the stored message assigned to the held connection at the agent's terminal in such a way that the message is audible only for the agent.

2. **(Currently Amended)** The process of claim 1, wherein the step of storing comprises saving the agent's message as an audio file, and the step of playing comprises playing the stored message back acoustically.

3. **(Currently Amended)** The process of claim 1 or 2, wherein the ~~saved~~ stored message is played back automatically immediately prior to establishing the renewed connection to a terminal.

4. **(Previously Presented)** The process of claim 1 or 2, wherein the separate hold line is connected to an interactive voice response, so that the renewed connection to a terminal can be initialized by the external caller.

5. **(Previously Presented)** The process of claim 1 or 2, wherein the external call is initially connected to a first terminal of a first agent and the held connection is transferred from the hold line to a second terminal of a second agent.